

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements Alaska

Lead Agency: National Park Service

This draft environmental impact statement (EIS) analyses five alternatives for quotas (limits) and operating requirements for cruise ships and tour, charter, and private vessels within Glacier Bay and Dundas Bay. A decision is needed to set the maximum level of vessels while protecting park resources and values. The lead agency in this decision is the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS). The Responsible Official is the NPS Regional Director, Alaska Region, Robert Arnberger.

Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve is a marine-oriented park and preserve located in Southeast Alaska, near Juneau. It is a popular destination because of its spectacular scenery, including tidewater glaciers and abundant wildlife. The purpose and need for the decision are to provide opportunities for people to visit the park while protecting park resources.

Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would incorporate current operating requirements, yet they differ in the number of vessels that would be permitted to enter Glacier Bay. The quota season for these alternatives would be June 1 through August 31. Under alternatives 4 and 5, the quota season would be extended to May 1 through September 30, vessel quotas would be initiated for Dundas Bay, and several new operating requirements would be established to protect park resources. Alternative 4 would maintain the current daily quotas for cruise ships and slightly reduce the daily quotas for the other three vessel classes. Alternative 4 also would reduce seasonal use days for cruise ships, tour vessels, and charter vessels, but would slightly increase seasonal use days for private vessels. Alternative 5 would maintain current vessel quotas from June 1 to August 31, and would extend the seasonal use day limits to May and September for cruise ships. The other vessel classes would maintain the June-through-August quota season. The Park Service has selected Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative. Alternative 4 is the environmentally preferred alternative.

Under all alternatives, vessel traffic would emit air and water pollution, disturb marine birds and mammals (including the threatened humpback whale), and affect experiences for some visitors who travel in non-motorized vessels (such as kayaks) and hike along the shorelines. Collisions with humpback whales and other marine mammals could occur.

Upon completion of the EIS, the Regional Director will sign and implement a record of decision that sets entry quotas and operating requirements for cruise ships and tour, charter, and private vessels in Glacier Bay and Dundas Bay.

The comment period for the draft EIS will end 60 days after the notice of availability is published in the *Federal Register*. Comments should be submitted to:

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For additional information, visit the project website at <http://www.nps.gov/glba>.